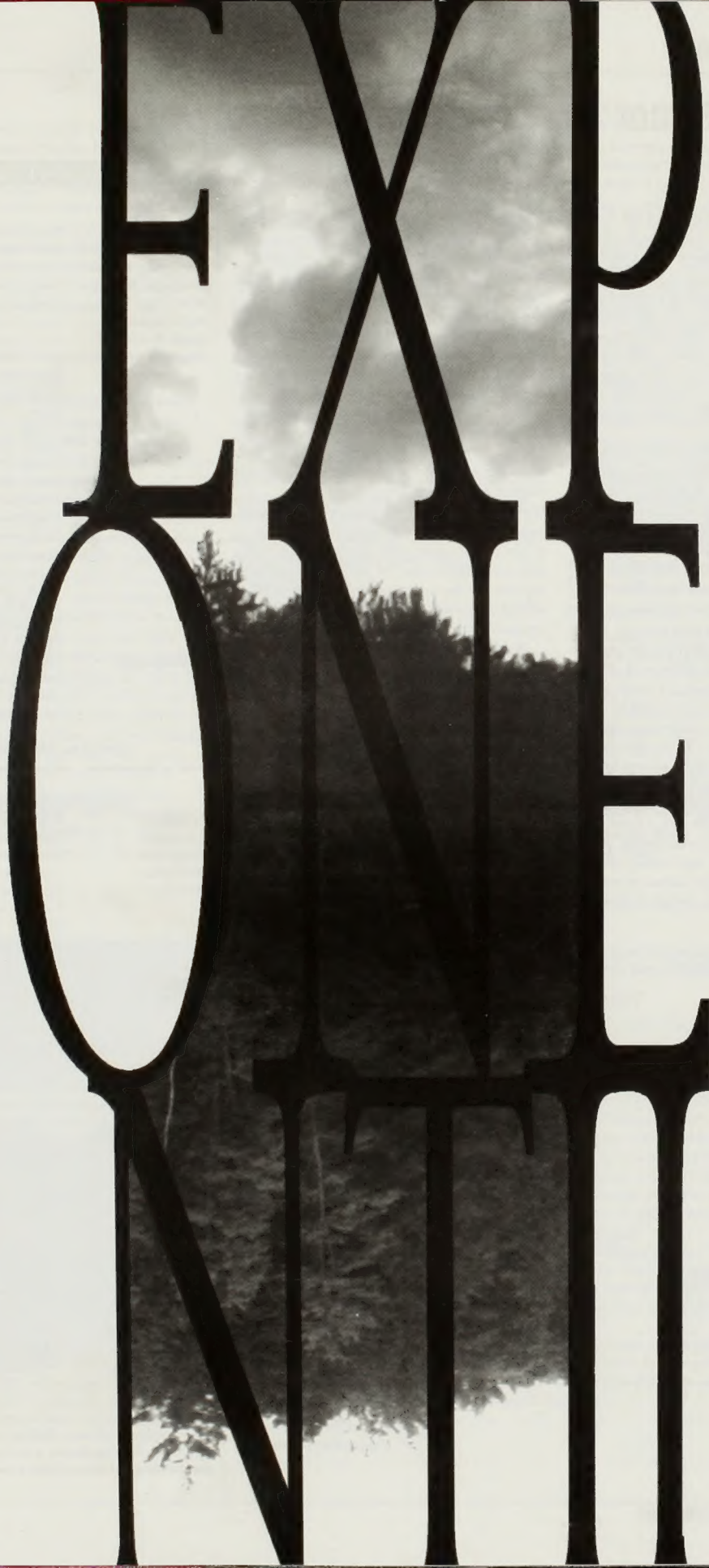


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EXPLORATION



From the Editor

Jenny Atkinson
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The story of Esther has always been my favorite in the Bible. When I was young I read a fictionalized account called *Behold Your Queen* by Gladys Malvern. This version, as I remember it, portrayed Esther as a beautiful and pure maiden who had no reason to believe her life would be anything except ordinary. When the king announced his search for a queen, Esther was persuaded to participate in the beauty pageant-like try-out. Out of all the women in the kingdom, the king chose Esther. A fairy tale from the Bible!

Luckily, the story goes on and as I grew up, I read the account in the Bible and became interested in other aspects of the plot. Now the story is my favorite because of an event which happens after Esther becomes a queen. When she learns of a plan to destroy her people—the Jews—she quickly and bravely chooses to take action and save them. I often think about Esther when I have a difficult decision to make.

Choosing often fills me with anxiety. Making one choice means losing a chance to make other choices—often other good choices. By choosing to edit *Exponent II*, I won't have time to do something else I may want to do—at least for now. Other times choosing means jumping into the unknown. I recently read all the comments from the surveys returned to us by *Exponent II* readers. I find myself wondering if and how it is possible for *Exponent II* to satisfy a group of readers who hold such a wide range of expectations, beliefs, and experiences. I believe it is possible, but I don't know for sure. Sometimes a personal choice intersects with public perception. We may feel good about our

decision but still ask, "What will people think?" Although I know it is inevitable, I don't like the idea that people—especially people who know little about *Exponent II*—will form an opinion of me simply because I've chosen to edit this paper.

Last year, soon after I learned I would be editing *Exponent II*, I heard a talk in church which I thought would make a great article for the paper. I approached the woman who had spoken and timidly asked her if she had heard of *Exponent II*. When she replied that she had, I asked, "Do you have a negative impression?" I was stunned by what I heard myself say. I had worked on *Exponent II* for over six years because I believed in the purpose of the paper and felt committed to helping create a place where people could write honestly about their ideas and experiences. Yet instead of expressing my love for the paper and my conviction about what it represents in conversation with this woman, I conveyed both uncertainty and fear.

At that moment I chose to change my behavior. I realized that to be truly committed to *Exponent II* meant that I would show my excitement about the paper before I knew whether or not another person shared my opinion. I would choose to act based on what I felt was right rather than based on a fear about how other people might react.

Now, I think about Esther. When she chose to act, she had no assurance that her actions would save her people. She was aware of the possible consequences of her choice. With this knowledge she planned, asked for support from her friends and her God, and acted. ♀

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The purpose of Exponent II is to promote sisterhood by providing a forum for Mormon women to share their life experiences in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Our common bond is our connection to the Mormon Church and our commitment to women in the Church. The courage and spirit of women challenge and inspire us to examine and shape the direction of our lives. We are confident that this open forum will result in positive change.

Dear Exponent,

I thought that you would be pleased to know that the prize money [for the Helen Candland Stark Personal Essay Contest] was given to an organization serving the women and children of Bangladesh. Twelve women received loans to begin businesses. Four women joined together and opened a store selling food items, pots and pans, etc. It is very successful! So you see, *Exponent II* has had a part in this—and that should give great satisfaction.

Laurel Madsen

Fort Collins, Colorado

Dear *Exponent II* Editors,

I read the issue that focused on homosexuality in the LDS community from cover to cover. I was simultaneously fascinated and repulsed. Because you have asked for feedback, I've given my response some more thought.

Conversations about sexuality, either hetero- or homo-, seem to me to be fraught with risks and uncertainties. Last week this subject came up between me and another LDS mother when her young daughter happened to ask me if "sex" was a bad word and a sinful thing to do. The subsequent conversation between me and the other mother was polite but tense. We decided that in the future, should her daughter ask me questions on this subject, I would send her home to her mother. On the other hand, I asked this mother that if any of my children should ask her such questions, to answer them and let me know they had asked. We agreed to disagree and to honor each other's wishes.

It was a brave thing to publish an issue devoted to homosexuality. I don't have direct experience with this lifestyle in any of the several LDS wards I've lived in. Reading this

issue made me more aware that 1) frankly, I would prefer my children to choose heterosexuality because it is complicated enough; 2) LDS authorities have done their fair share of bashing homosexuals; 3) homosexuals have been dumped on in unchristian ways by bishops and others called to lovingly "judge" them; 4) LDS homosexuals, like other homosexuals I've seen on television and in magazines, champion a cause I just don't agree with. The sister who wants insurance benefits and adoption privileges had arguments that appealed only to my left brain. When push comes to shove, I don't want tax monies spent to support lifestyles that benefit one generation: it's too short-sighted a policy, benefiting the homosexual couple only. Probably nothing can convince me that children need two parents of the same sex.

Reading the homosexuality issue broadened my vicarious experience. It was a discussion I'd love to see, but probably won't, in the *Ensign*. While I didn't agree with every perspective, I knew I needed to read each one. Keep up the good work. Thanks for your courage!

Sharon E. Vasicek

Westfield, Massachusetts

To the new Editor,

The reader's survey was a great idea. I didn't have enough room to tell you what a joy it has been to be a subscriber these many years. For so long in my membership in the church, I felt isolated because I didn't feel that the Church valued women as much as men. We were paid lip service, in my opinion. I also felt that a lot of history was sanitized. When I discovered "alternate" voices such as the people who wrote and published magazines like yours, *Sunstone*, and *Dialogue*, I found like-minded people and

knew there were many of us.

As the years have gone on, I realize even more how important it is to bring the more "controversial" topics out into the open and not hide them. The issue devoted to homosexuality and how it affects members of the Church (Vol. 20, No. 1) was sorely needed. When my ex-husband came out to me in 1992, I was devastated, of course, and so very alone in my grief. It was such a big secret (he was a professor at BYU, so the secret had to be protected until he could get another job), and I felt I was the only one this had ever happened to. But, slowly and with much effort, I was able to contact others who helped me tremendously. Bringing this out in the open has surely helped many others who have found themselves in the same situation.

I hope *Exponent II* will become an even stronger voice for truth and reason, even if it is uncomfortable for active Mormons. Keep up the wonderful work you do at the *Exponent* and great success to you as you change the guard at the editorial level.

Janice Robertson

Orem, Utah

Dear *Exponent II*,

I thoroughly enjoy every issue of *Exponent II*. No matter what the subject, it is always timely and increases my understanding of other women. It also relieves my moments of loneliness at church (I'm a college professor, one of those dreaded, questioning "intellectuals") and gives me the courage and knowledge to support women in my branch whose trials are different from mine. Thank you so much for your efforts on behalf of the women of our church.

Ann Barrott Wicks

Oxford, Ohio



The Exponent Retreat weekend held at Hillsboro Camp (see cover picture) was spent relaxing, thinking, eating, and enjoying each other's company. Elizabeth Davis-Edwards shared the following during the culminating Quaker Meeting:

As we were sitting around the dining hall yesterday throwing out ways we could help *Exponent II* thrive, I was struck by the intense power resonating in that room from each of you. Suddenly, I was sure this group of women could solve any problem; handed the national deficit, world hunger, or racial injustice, we would find the answer if we put our heads and energies together.

I want to speak to how we can utilize this power, this energy that is alive and awake in each of us to effect CHANGE. We all want to make change happen—especially for women: women in the church, women next door and around the world, the women within ourselves. I believe the most effective way to make change is to rid ourselves of the "they" syndrome. I've heard and made many references myself to that effect, "I'm not a traditional Mormon woman—I don't have anything in common with them." I believe this thinking severely lessens our power to make change; because we fail to recognize the power that lies in others. For it is only by tapping the power of others that real change is wrought.

There is no "they," only one big "we." We are all spread along the vast continuum of life. Some are here, some are there, but there are no lines to divide us. There is no traditional Mormon woman, just as there is no traditional woman. If we truly want to change the world for women, we must meet each woman where she is, recognize her worth, take her hand, and steady her as she expands her world and takes that next scary step up.

I'm so grateful for your strength, wisdom, and passion. Many of you will serve as my role models throughout this coming year as I continue to uncover myself. I do believe that the women in this room can and will change the world. I thank you for the beautiful faces and fiery eyes that have been burned into my brain and will continue to fortify me.

Elizabeth Davis-Edwards

Melrose, Massachusetts

The Year of the Bad Haircut (Otherwise Known as "Life after College")

Anna Haglund
Somerville, Massachusetts

As I was doing the obligatory perusal of trashy periodicals in the supermarket line last week, I couldn't help but see an article on the cover of *Allure* magazine entitled "Are You Your Hair? The connection between the mane and self-esteem." I didn't have time to read it, as *Glamour's* feature entitled "The Secrets of Men: What Turns Them On, What Terrifies Them, and What They Yearn For" was far too enticing. But I wondered about my hair as I was putting my groceries in the car. And as I pulled out of the parking lot. And as I drove home. Am I my hair? Am I?

Coming into the house, I caught a glimpse of my reflection in the window. Okay, so it's true that I do invest some serious time and money in my hair. I worry about it in the rain and have changed plans or styles because of the weather. Occasionally I have missed a bus while spending the eternal "last" minute perfecting it. That doesn't mean that I am literally my hair. Actually, it's often the other way around: sometimes my hair is me.

My hair has often represented significant milestones in my life. In sixth grade I exercised

mucho independence by cutting it to my shoulders. Two years later, the inevitable eighth grade perm catapulted me into the right social circle. In high school, this circle split in two, with the signifying marker being an alleged disinterest in hair and make-up (a frantic attempt to avoid the damning "high-maintenance" label). This New England prep look carried me into college in California, where I was part of a large minority, comprised of fellow easterners and those from the Pacific Northwest. Southern California, I soon discovered, is all about maintenance.

I kept my hair long, but after an introduction to the hairdryer/diffuser combo (a duo as important as chocolate and peanut butter), I achieved the carefully coiffed curls of Seinfeld's (and, not incidentally, L'Oréal's) Elaine. In the anticipation of change, I cut my hair to my chin the summer before senior year. Arriving at school that fall, I lightened it and learned to make it straight. Short, blond, and straight seemed radically different after having had long curly hair for seven consecutive years. My new-found bravery allowed experimentation

all year, and I tried numerous styles with slight variations in color (all blond, of course, what else is there?).

Graduation marked the end of many things, most notably direction for my life and satisfaction with my hair. I arrived home on May 20th with no plans and, even worse, no hairdresser. Thinking this was only a temporary arrangement (how foolish), I remained at home, in limbo for the entire summer. Just as August unfurled its hot and humid glory, my plans to move to DC with friends came unglued, because we lost the cohesive desire and nerve necessary to sign a lease without an anticipated income.

Life without plans lacks glamour. And there was nothing planned or glamorous about my situation. I had no prospects, no ideas, and very few friends in the area. In a desperate attempt to alleviate oncoming depression, I made an appointment to get my hair cut (why not? It had worked in college).

Casually confident of my ability to look like Winona Ryder or Mia Farrow, or some other icon of gorgeous hairlessness, I told my hair-

Personal Pilgrimage Facing Life with Humor and Hope

Marilyn Damron White
Bothell, Washington

The following edited excerpts are from a talk given by Marilyn Damron White on May 31, 1997, when she was awarded the Lifetime Pilgrim Award by the Utah Pilgrimage organization. Ms. White has had multiple sclerosis since December of 1993.

Good comedy is hard to write, which I discovered as I began my personal pilgrimage to write handicapped humor in preparation for this talk tonight. I'm currently pursuing a brand of Humor Therapy since it seems that most other traditional and non-traditional treatments have fallen short of my expectations.

A relevant experience happened during my humor quest. In the summer of 1996, I had a major multiple sclerosis exacerbation. The only physical fitness regime available to me for five or six years had been swimming via snorkeling. Because I never learned to swim the "real" way with controlled breathing, snorkeling was a real gift. The lap counters tell me I swim about a mile a day, five days a week. I swim only for the non-competitive reasons: meditation, prayer, and aerobics.

The last two months of that summer, my daughters would drive me to the pool, push me in the wheelchair to the end of the pool, and pick me up an hour or so later. One particularly sad day, I started crying while I was snorkeling and ended up with a face full of water. After it

happened a second time, I gathered my courage and said to myself, "Marilyn, you can either snorkel or you can stand here and feel sorry for yourself, but you can't do both." I chose to swim.

While doing my laps last month, I recalled a funny story told during a combined Relief Society/Priesthood meeting on Easter Sunday. This time I laughed so hard that I got a faceful of water in my snorkel. Laughter is a healer, but a stand-up (or sit-down) comic, I am not.

I've thought a lot about the tendency to wish you were someone else, somewhere else, or had something else other than what you do have—be it a job, a house, a spouse, or an illness. A very astute but somewhat perverted cartoonist named John Callahan, who lives in the Northwest, made me start pondering this again. He is a 46-year-old quadriplegic and recovering alcoholic who wrote an autobiography called *Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot*, which is based on one of his cartoons that shows wheelchair tracks in the dirt leading away from an Old West-style bank robbery. A man in the pursuing sheriff's posse delivers the punchline book title. Callahan discovered through his years of rehabilitation therapy that people in iron lungs all wanna be quads, quads all wanna be paras, paras all wanna be able-bodied, and all of you able-bodied wanna be Jane Fonda!

(paraphrased—Callahan, p. 72). Why this human tendency to want what we don't have? In my case, the book helped me focus on the things I still have and can still do. Even though I had that huge setback in the summer of 1996, I can still read, play the piano, crochet, interact with my children and spouse, and snorkel.

Focusing on the positive skills one has is akin to another favorite pastime that my husband Lee and I have continued to play for almost ten years now. We call it "Compared to What?" The object is to find something that's not working in your life, like say double vision, loss of equilibrium, or even trouble at work. Then you say, "Which is worse? Losing mobility or constant ringing in your ears?" Or in Lee's case it might be, "Which is worse? Having to deal with the gut-wrenching dilemmas of sexual misconduct in the workplace or having to discipline a very productive staff member who happens to be active in the Christian-right movement and who tore down an advertisement in the employee lounge which promoted a gay/lesbian film festival?"

But there's a larger dilemma in my life that isn't as simplistic a philosophy as the singsong "Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative" mentality. It's much bigger than the "Count Your Many Blessings," "Don't Worry, Be Happy," or "Hakuna Matata" platitudes we

dresser to try "something different, something short." But instead, as I gazed into the mirror, I saw an image more similar to Kerri Strug than anything else. I suppose that's fine if you're sixteen, five foot nothing, and have just won the Olympic gold. It is not okay if you are attempting to portray a presentable, soon-to-be professional, college grad. What hope did I have with prospective employers if I looked better suited to the cover of a Wheaties box than at my fashion alma mater Ann Taylor?

So I decided to put off the job search for a little while (three inches to be exact). This haircut had momentarily suppressed any greedy corporate appetite I had, which was okay for the next few months as I had just landed an internship at the *Boston Book Review*. Located right in Harvard Square, it suited my appearance far better than my retail job.

So I sold clothes and proofread throughout the fall. My last haircut had put the fear of God in me, and I vowed not to cut it till Easter. It slowly grew back, and by January I was ready to go. But where?



*I wondered about
my hair as I was
putting my groceries
in the car.*



*And as I pulled
out of the
parking lot.*



*And as I drove
home.*

*Am I my
hair?*

Am I?

Publishing was not it, so I stopped interning. Retail life never is, was, or could be it for me, but the part-time work was necessary for the discount. Temping seemed to be a good way to make contacts and get experience and has supplied me with enough plot lines for a new TV series. So I temped my way through all of cold January and slushy February. I interviewed whenever and wherever I could and sucked industry information from every possible source.

Nine months and twenty-two days after graduation, I found a home in the financial district of downtown Boston at an investment firm, surprising everyone, including myself. The future is just as uncertain as it ever was. I could stay here, get an MBA and send my leftist, pinko, high-tax supporting parents to an early grave. Or, after much sweat, toil, and tears, I could host a pinstripe burning bonfire in a fit of capitalist disgust. Who knows? But, as *Allure* magazine has promised, now that the hair's back, all I need is nonfat yogurt and aerobics for lunch, and it's up the corporate ladder I go. ¶

hear so much in word and song. My current quandary epitomizes to me life's paradoxes and perplexities in a way simple platitudes will never do.

Last year I participated in a human clinical trial through the University of Washington. I went in for my initial visit and brain-wave scan at U-Dub (as the University of Washington is affectionately referred to in Seattle). The lead researcher, Dr. Todd Richards, asked what I did professionally, if anything, before some of the more debilitating effects of MS surfaced. I mentioned that my last job had been computer inputting of a manuscript commissioned by the Women's Research Institute at Brigham Young University. He asked, "You aren't by any chance LDS, are you?" When I answered in the affirmative, he said, "Well, you're speaking with the 1st Counselor in the Lake Forest Park Ward bishopric." I couldn't believe my luck. Lake Forest Park was five minutes from my house; and his daughter eventually drove me to a few of my appointments. I began to feel positively led to this scientist and began to fantasize that my help on this study would be a first step to finding a cure for this insidious disease. I even had great hope that it was perhaps my destiny in life to be a human guinea pig in this venture that would be a catalyst for more miracles of modern science.

I received my first electromagnetic device in April 24, 1996. The study of thirty patients took place in groups of eight—four with the active device and four with an inactive placebo. For the first day and a half, I was sure I had been given a placebo. I detected no changes at all. But when I woke up the third morning, what I've termed my "world view" was greatly modified. I could focus more accurately on objects, which greatly affected my ability to walk in a straighter line. When my daughter, Lisa, came home from work for lunch, I gushed, "Lisa, walk with me up to the mailbox, and don't support me at all." I was almost in tears by the time we finished our trek of about 200 uphill feet. When Lee got home from a business trip the next day, I surprised him with an almost eighth of a mile unassisted stroll around a couple of cul-de-sacs.

Dr. Richards faxed my early journal entries to the FDA. He was convinced as well that I probably did not have the placebo, but he did not know for sure because it was a double blind study. I had been working with a physical therapist who dubbed my improvement in just two days' time "nothing short of miraculous." She said she had never seen anything like it in all her years of practice.

At the seven-week mark, three others in my group of eight testers and I began experiencing

an exacerbation. Without going into all the gory details, mine landed me squarely in my wheelchair by mid-June. In fact, by the end of the study I held the dubious distinction of being the one who improved the most but then fell the hardest.

I had my first panic attack one night when Lee was out of town, complete with profuse sweating and racing heart. My right leg went rigid on me, and I couldn't get out of my waterbed or out from under my heavy down comforter.

Then came the stunner a week later, on June 26. The study was "unblinded," and the four of us experiencing setbacks were all on the placebos! Something was drastically wrong, and Dr. Richards wasn't sure what. His voice sounded frantic and confused. I felt sorry for him. He kept repeating how much they were learning from the study. I was thoroughly bewildered. I wanted to rage and scream, "Learn on somebody else!" but I was numb and worried. It's significant and ironic to me now that the dictionary defines a placebo as "a harmless, unmedicated preparation given as a medicine to humor a patient." I'm still grasping for that humor.

I knew I was on my way to severe depression. On July 5, Lee and Dr. Richards gave me a priesthood blessing in the lab. I received

peace of mind, but I still had much confusion and many unanswerable questions. I think all our lives are filled with incongruities and perplexities—mine no more than yours.

Throughout the remainder of 1996, I improved physically and emotionally. I stayed on the device until Dr. Richards admitted there was “no statistically significant improvement” except in two minor areas. During the same time, I was having a side effect I didn’t like.

Now I’m getting around the house with my cane or grabbing onto walls and furniture, and I use the chair, too. It’s handy in the kitchen after I’ve been standing for more than 15 minutes. My new neurologist, Dr. Dunn, has been very aggressive with my treatment. I’m now on a beta interferon drug called Avonex and give myself intramuscular injections once a week. He has even been willing to let me try the “cocktail” approach of combining drugs. I’ve

added a drug called Methotrexate that is used in cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and other autoimmune disease treatments. It’s not making my hair fall out, and it seems to be helping enough to continue, but doctors can’t be certain about long-range effects. In life, no one can be certain of the long-range effects.

What I do know is that the Lord still loves me even through my afflictions. I feel that He weeps with me in my trials but is not willing right now to remove them. Maybe it’s similar to your trials. But I firmly believe it is still my course to try to relish and even savor, if possible, life’s ambiguities. In my personal pilgrimage on this earth, I’m going to tap into whatever emotional reserves I possess that will allow me to grapple with life’s abstruseness first and foremost with humor—then integrity, dignity, and love. This is my hope for each of us as we muddle through life’s uncertainties together. ■

Reader's Survey

Thank you! From the surveys mailed out to our current readership at the beginning of the summer, we received a significant 35% response rate! You have helped us update our understanding of who is interested in subscribing to *Exponent II*; what age groups we are reaching, along with marital status; your definition of church activity; and why you read the paper. You have also provided us with excellent recommendations on how to improve the paper as a forum for enriching each other as women with different outlooks and backgrounds.

Some of you have probably completed *Exponent II* surveys in the past. You may be interested to compare some of the results “then and now.” Two past surveys yielded a very high response rates (49% and 37%). We have found that there is still little change in the marital status of our readership (currently, 79% are married and 5.1% single compared to 87% married and 7% single in a previous survey). As reported in past surveys, the majority of our readers cover a twenty-year age span. Currently, 23.4% are between 40 and 49 years of age, while 31.3% are between 50 and 59. The highest proportion of our readers are between 45 and 54 (31.5%). In comparison, only 2.3% of our current readers are women who are between 20 and 29. In a past survey, 4% of readers were women between 18 and 25.

We decided to report feedback from the current survey over two issues of *Exponent II*. This issue will cover quantitative topics, while the next issue will cover the more qualitative responses. You may be asking how we define quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative feedback includes learning about the demographic profile of *Exponent II* readers:

- gender
- age
- marital status
- where raised during the formative years
- baptized member of the LDS church
- raised in the church or convert
- self-definition of activity level
- length of time reading *Exponent II*
- subscriber or “borrower” of the paper

Qualitative feedback includes:

- why you choose to read *Exponent II*
- your favorite sections of *Exponent II*
- what you consider important topics covered in past issues
- recommended topics for future issues
- recommended changes in content
- recommended changes in design
- any additional comments

Breaking down the feedback in this manner provides a clear profile of who our readership is. In contrast, the qualitative feedback tells us what you think of *Exponent II*—your opinions, thoughts, and suggestions for improving the paper. We have included a sampling of your comments and thoughts to help whet your appetite for the next issue:

I am quite conservative in my opinions and adherence to gospel principles, but I enjoy different perspectives and can often relate to others' feelings. The paper

The Women of The House

Irene is in the parlor with the ice-pick, probing
Her tear ducts, trying to find
Where the sadness comes from; tonight
She thinks she'll reach the bottom of the salt
Water well; she will tear
Up its stone floor.
What lies sleeping beneath
She will murder; she will stab
Out its dark heart and inky liver.
She knows she will bleed
Black tears for days,
But it won't be sadness.
It will be a merry, ebony wake.
When neighbors inquire
She will smile and sigh,
“Oh, just cheap mascara.”

Kate is in the hallway with the electrical tape, fixing
Her heart, not a glass one or ceramic,
But a modern, sturdy plastic one. It hung
On a blue ribbon tied to her breast bone.
There were three tiny yellow birds
Inside; they squooze through the crack
Yesterday but turned into water
When they hit the air; they fell
To the hard wood floor like fat tears.
Kate pushed some green caterpillars inside
The crack. She is taping the plastic
Heart up like a black cocoon.
When she is done, she will hang
it back on the blue ribbon;
She knows in the spring
She will hear it beat again.

June is in the sewing room with the scissors, cutting
Out a new soul from two yards of pink
Chiffon. Her old soul was of blue organdy;
It was so stiff and scratchy; it made her aggressive
And so assertive. This new soul
Will bring the men with roses and chocolates:
Milk chocolates with raspberry
Centers in a heart-shaped box.
She is cutting out the fingers
Now, very carefully. Soon
She will wear this soul on her back beneath
A white cotton shirt, tucked into a blue
Wool skirt; she will hold the transparent
Rosey hands in her fleshy white
Fists and sigh low and sadly: already
The edges have begun to fray.

J.R. Leishman
Provo, Utah



gives me the opportunity to think about issues, and in most cases, strengthens my resolve to be actively involved in the Church.

Robyn Anderson

I feel that much of the content of Exponent II is somewhat tame. I get the feeling that the writers are self-censoring. I would love the paper to reflect a more honest and open dialogue about religious, personal, and family matters.

Alysa Revell

Keep up the good work. We women of the Church need to be able to relate to each other as we really are and not as we ought to be according to the principle of perfection. We need to shed our "foyer faces" and be accepted for who we really are. We struggle with many things within the "silent chambers of the heart." Reading others' experiences and thoughts and struggles and pains and joys gives us courage and strength to carry our own burdens and gives a chance to feel not so alone and to weep for a moment when others' experiences or thoughts parallel our own lives. Also, we learn more compassion for each of our sisters in their diverse circumstances when we can see into their hearts.

Anonymous

I really like the balance in Exponent II. It is important to share our questions and struggles without having to proclaim belonging to a "camp" (such as the loyal opposition, "iron rodders," and so forth). I strongly believe in the goals of the Church but often question whether the approach of the organizational Church matches the stated gospel goals. I think many women in the church could benefit from Exponent II and the honesty (even if occasionally painful) displayed in its pages.

Unfortunately, there seems to be an attitude among many members that anything beyond the Ensign will be harmful to testimony building. I find my testimony is strengthened by Exponent II. It is heartening to know there are many women like me who want to participate in perfecting the Church.

Terry Evanson

I am the RS president of 278 women in a very diverse ward. Your essays have helped me listen to my sisters with an understanding I don't have from personal experience. I don't always agree, but at least I can assure sisters they are not the only ones to have had certain problems or feelings.

Anonymous

I enjoy reading Exponent II. I'd hardly change anything. I am interested in how other women study, think about, and implement the gospel of Christ in their lives. The fundamental assumption of the gospel is that people can change. How are other women finding strength and courage to make these changes? How are women passing on their spiritual wisdom to their children? These are issues common not only to LDS women but also to women of faith in all cultures and throughout history.

Maurine Watkins

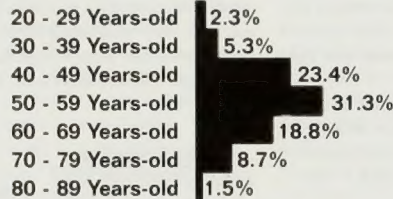
Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey, for sharing of yourselves, and for providing suggestions on how to make Exponent II an even better paper.

Until the next issue . . .

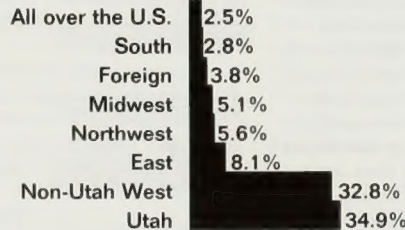
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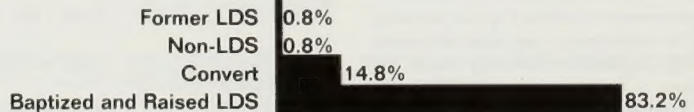
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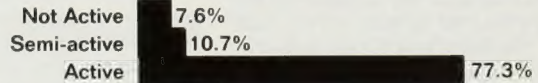
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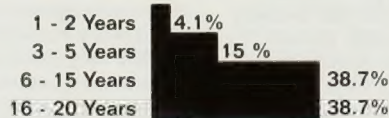
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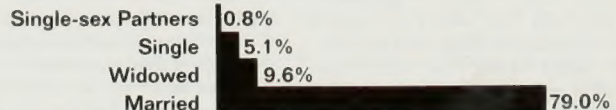
Self-Defined Activity



Years Reading Exponent II



Marital Status



Fear Not, I am With Thee

Finding Strength in Hymns

Margaret Maughan
Cambridge, Massachusetts

When I consider the reasons for singing hymns in worship services, I always think of a Church member I read about who was deaf. Her ward had no sign language translator, and she rarely could get a seat at the front of the chapel in order to lip-read the speakers. Nonetheless, she attended Church meetings faithfully and seemed to enjoy them very much. One day someone asked her what she got from the services, since she could not receive the messages of the speakers. She smiled and said, "I can read the words of the hymns as you sing them. The hymns are my sermons." Like this woman, I have received a number of sermons from the hymns over the years.

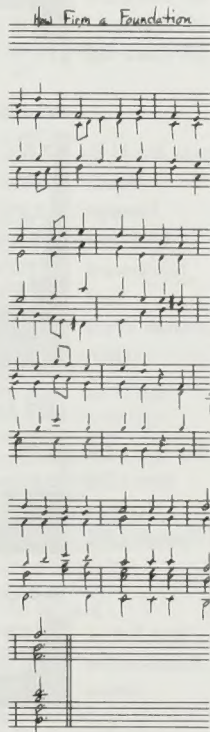
Many times the message of a hymn or even just a phrase of one has been exactly what I needed at a given moment. One such incident occurred a number of years ago, when I was living in New York City.

At that time I was not active in the Church. I had had lifelong involvement with Mormonism—growing up in an active LDS family, graduating from BYU, and serving enthusiastically in ward callings. But in my late 20s I started realizing that although I enjoyed being in the Church, the gospel itself didn't really mean anything to me. I had wanted to believe Church teachings and had tried hard to believe them. I didn't disbelieve them. But I just had no personal feeling for the gospel. So when at one point I became offended with a few ward members, it was easy to become inactive. After that, I continued living the basic lifestyle of a Latter-day Saint, but I wanted no more involvement with the Church, choosing instead to concentrate on my music ambitions. Any religious practices—attending church, paying tithing, or even praying—were things in which I had no interest.

Shortly before relocating from New York, I had a dispute with my landlord, an attorney who owned real estate. My apartment was the entire third floor, the top floor, of a very small building. The second floor was my landlord's small law office, which was not occupied after business hours. The first floor was rented to an actor who was often gone. So usually I was the only one in the building at night. I had been angry with my landlord for some time because I felt he had been neglectful; despite repeated requests for him to correct the problems in my apartment, no action had been taken. He, in turn, was angry at me for mentioning these matters to him so often; he is from a culture outside the United States where women do not argue with men. So, a number of days before moving from New York, when I tried again to discuss the apartment problems with him, the discussion quickly became a very heated argument. Finally, my landlord walked away from me, saying that he was going to take legal action against me. He then added, "I'll do some

other things, too. You'll be sorry." At the time I discounted his vague threat; I felt he was trying to have the last word in the argument.

A few days later, however, I received an anonymous message warning me that my landlord had arranged for someone to break into my apartment late that night to harm me physically. This note was credible to me because it mentioned specifics about me; I believed the writer knew my landlord. I became concerned and showed the note to the police that afternoon. Although they tried to reassure me, there was little they could actually do, because my landlord was not there to question and the police had only the short note for information.



*I was pacing up
and down,
thinking "What
am I going to
do?" It didn't
occur to me to
pray. So I
didn't go to the
Lord. But He
came to me.
And He did so
in a way that
was very recog-
nizable to me.*

As the day progressed, I became more and more concerned. At ten o'clock that evening, my landlord came into his office on the second floor, stayed briefly, and then left, leaving the front door to the building unlocked, something he had specifically warned me many times not to do. When I realized it was unlocked, I was horrified. I quickly locked it again and jammed my key into the keyhole from my side of the door so that an intruder would not be able to pick the lock from the outside.

By this time I was very alarmed. I went back into my apartment, locked my front door, and tried to determine what to do. My options

were limited. I didn't dare go outside my building to seek help; I felt safer inside my apartment at that late hour. My lack of neighbors in the building, which had seemed so advantageous when I had wanted to practice music in my home without disturbing others, now was a disadvantage because there was no one to help me. I had no working telephone because, unwisely, I had already had my telephone disconnected, believing I was being efficient about taking care of my utilities before moving and not foreseeing any need to call for help. And if an intruder were to get in, there seemed to be no way of eluding him because my apartment had no fire escape as it should have had. The only way out was the same way the intruder would be trying to come in. All these factors were in my mind as I considered my situation, and they added up to just one conclusion: I was trapped.

I felt extremely vulnerable at that moment, despite having jammed the front door keyhole, and I tried desperately to think of additional self-defense measures. Suddenly some ideas occurred to me, and I hastily made the preparations. First, I turned on all the lights in my apartment, thinking light might deter an intruder. Next, I removed one of the storm windows in my bedroom and laid the glass across the bottom of the stairs that led up to my apartment, fitting the pane snugly into the stairwell. I then put my coat and purse beside the open bedroom window. If someone were to break into my home, I reasoned, he would either have to step through the window pane or else move it in order to get up the stairs into my apartment. Either way, it would give me enough time to rush to the bedroom, grab my coat and purse, climb out of the window, drop from the third floor down to the pavement, and then, if I hadn't injured myself in the fall, hurry to the 24-hour diner two blocks away and call the police from there.

The escape plan didn't seem like a great idea even at the time, but it was better than no plan at all. I thought—or perhaps simply hoped—it might work. I placed a chair at the top of the stairs so that I could sit there and watch my front door if I heard anything suspicious. I wanted to know immediately if someone broke in.

Despite these preparations, I still felt tremendously apprehensive. By about 11:30 P.M., I was pacing up and down my apartment, thinking, "What am I going to do if he comes? What am I going to do?" It didn't occur to me to pray; I simply didn't think of it. So I didn't go to the Lord. But He came to me. And He did so in a way that was very recognizable to me. As I continued pacing up and down, I started noticing some words coming to my mind. At first I didn't know which words they were. I was very focused on protecting myself, and I didn't

want to divert my attention from that. But the words continued to come, and finally I turned my attention to them. The words were:

Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not afraid, for I am thy God, and will still give thee aid. I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

These words, of course, are the third verse of "How Firm a Foundation." However, the version that came to me was changed a bit. In the hymn book, the words are

*Fear not, I am with thee;
oh, be not **dismayed**.* (emphasis mine)

But the words that came to me were

*Fear not, I am with thee;
oh, be not **afraid**.* (emphasis mine)

The words of this hymn seemed specific to my situation. They came in a calm, reassuring way but also with tremendous power and authority. In the midst of my great anxiety and confusion, this message came as a clarifying truth to me and also as a promise of powerful protection. As soon as I realized what the words were, I started saying them to myself along with what I could hear coming to my mind. I said the words over and over, almost like a chant. And I started to feel calmer and believe that everything would be all right.

I wish I could say that that feeling of reassurance remained with me the rest of the night. But about ten minutes later, when I heard the first scratching sounds at the front door of the building and knew someone was trying to get in, I was frightened. I sat in the chair at the top of the stairs and stared down the staircase at my front door, where on the other side was the front door of the building and the intruder. As I listened to the quiet, sporadic sounds of someone trying to pick the lock, I could scarcely breathe, fearing that at any moment I would see my would-be assailant coming through the doorway. I sat in the chair, staring down the staircase and more or less holding my breath, for more than 2 1/2 hours, as the intruder tried unsuccessfully to break into my home.

By about 5:30 A.M., as it got lighter outside and I realized I hadn't heard any sounds for nearly three hours, it seemed clear that the person had gone. I turned off the lights, feeling comforted by the approaching dawn. I then moved the chair away from the stairs, closed the bedroom window, and sank down onto the bed, exhausted.

When I think of that night, I don't think mainly of the paltry, and probably impracticable, self-defense measures I had prepared. Nor do I mainly recall how I thought, "This night

will never end," as I listened to the intruder's increasingly angry, frustrated attempts to pick the lock and force the door open. I think mainly that, when I really needed some extraordinary help, the Lord came to help me, even when I didn't ask Him to do so, and I remember how much I appreciated that. I had known and loved the hymn "How Firm a Foundation" for years. When those words came to me, I felt I could believe and trust the message.

My feelings about the Church did not change immediately as a result of this incident. It was several months later when I first contacted ward leaders and began Church activity again. But in retrospect, I can see that this experience was an initial step in finally having a personal feeling for the gospel. I hadn't wanted to be with the Lord during my five years of inactivity. But He had wanted to be with me and manifested that when I faced the most serious challenge I had ever faced, communicating to me through music, that which I had embraced when I had turned away from Him. I had always believed in God, but had never before felt much connection to Him. His unexpected reaching out to me that night brought me closer to Him then. Remembering this experience has brought me even closer to Him since. ❧

Favorite Memories

Ruth N. Dickson
Salt Lake City, Utah

I was intrigued by an experiment that I heard Carolyn Tanner Irish, the newly ordained Episcopal Bishop in Utah, explain in a talk at the University of Utah. She mentioned that she had at one time asked her children what their best memories of growing up were. She assumed they would say, "Our trip to Disneyland" or mention some special expensive Christmas gift or some object she had spent time and money to obtain for them. She was surprised to hear them recall simple, almost-forgotten events. From their responses, she surmised that these "best" times had three things in common: 1) they were productive; 2) they were interactive; and 3) they were inexpensive or even free.

As a result of her talk, I decided to conduct my own experiment. At a family gathering, I asked my siblings to name their most memorable experiences growing up. No one mentioned Christmas or a birthday or a graduation. Instead, one brother immediately said, "What I liked best was when Mother would make the bed over us." When my mother would get ready to put clean sheets on the beds, she would put on the bottom sheet (this was in the

days before "contour"), we would crawl on top, and she would place the top sheet, blankets, and then a quilt over us. I remember closing my eyes and enjoying the increasing warmth.

Another brother remembered when my father would bring a truckful of pea vines to our yard. We would pick the pods from the vines and then laboriously shell the peas.

One of my favorite memories was of canning produce in the fall. I think I liked this time of peeling the peaches (or pears or tomatoes), placing them in steamed bottles, adding the boiled water, and placing them in an enamel canner for processing because as we bottled the fruit, we talked.

My mother's favorite memory was walking to the home of her grandfather, who was an avid reader. She would plead, "Grandpa, please read to me," and without pausing he would lift her to his lap and continue reading—this time, aloud—from his technical book or one of the classics. She didn't understand the words but it was still one of her favorite memories.

My siblings' and mother's memories confirmed Carolyn Irish's theory. Each of their

memories was productive, interactive, and certainly inexpensive.

I was anxious to try this experiment on our own children. My oldest son immediately said his memory was of when he cut his little sister's hair and we didn't get mad. Another responded that his favorite thing was when I read to them in the car as we traveled. Another child remembered playing made-up games with silly rules composed as we went along. Someone else remembered sitting on top of the roof to watch the fireworks on the Fourth of July. Another said she liked hearing me read by Coleman lantern as we camped in a tent. The mention of camping trips may have triggered the next response by her sister, who said she liked doing the dishes camp-style. This involved heating the water over the camp fire or on the camp stove, getting out the dish towels, and chatting as we productively, interactively, inexpensively talked together while we got the dishes done.

At the end of our discussions, my husband, who remembered shelling out a lot of cash for presents or the "perfect vacation," turned to me and asked, "How come no one mentioned going to Disneyland?" ❧

Burial Places

Karen Rosenbaum
Kensington, California

Maren lay on her stomach on Uncle Gus's back lawn and knotted dandelion chains while she waited for her cousins Len and Jill. "Aw, you just missed them," Aunt Ruth Ann had said after she kissed Mom and Dad on the cheeks and gave Maren a hug. "They just left five minutes ago with Gus to put gasoline in the jeep. Then they were going over to the stable to feed the horses." Aunt Ruth Ann had poured them big glasses of green punch, then wiped her hands on her apron. "It's a shame you didn't get here a little sooner."

Gulping down her punch, Maren had left the grown-ups in the kitchen and come out back to check on the rabbits and sit in the clover under the kitchen window. She could hear Aunt Ruth Ann and Mom talking while they were tying bouquets and boxing fruit bottles. Dad would be making little tags so they'd get the right bouquet on the right grave. When everyone was ready, Maren would get to ride to the cemeteries in Uncle Gus's jeep with Len and Jill and all the flowers. Mom and Dad would pick up Grandpa and Aunt Carrie in the Oldsmobile, and Aunt Ruth Ann would go get the great uncles and aunts in her Ford.

"At least she passed easy," Aunt Ruth Ann was saying.

"It's been eight and a half months," said Mom, "and I remember it clear as if it was today. I don't think I'll ever forget it."

"You don't forget. You don't ever forget when it's your own close kin. Most especially your mother."

"I was coming up on the bus to see her, remember . . ."

"And I had you paged at the station in Salt Lake before you left."

"There I was on the bus, all alone, looking out the window and not seeing anything. I don't ever want to live over those two hours again."

"No worry there," said Dad. "You don't get to live over any hours again."

"Oh, Willy," Mom said. "Now where's that girl?" She came to the window. "Maren!"

Maren roused herself and sat up. "Out here," she called. "Just waitin'." She looped a dandelion chain around her wrist and examined a scab on her knee.

"We bought that big plot," Aunt Ruth Ann was saying. "There's room for all of us."

"No thank you," said Dad. "I don't want to have my remains amoldering away in the earth. I'm going to be cremated. Dinah can be buried there if she wants to."

"Willy!" Aunt Ruth Ann was cross. "Only pagans get cremated. Dinah, you gonna let him turn to ashes?"

Mom probably shrugged. "It's up to him. I don't have any say in it."

"You do if you live longer than he does. Willy, don't you know you won't have a body to be resurrected in if you burn it all up?"

"Huh," Dad said. "What do you think is left

of you after you've been underground a year?" "Shh," Mom whispered. "Maren's out there."

Dad didn't lower his voice. "She knows all about it. She went and dug up her hamster last summer. Kids start out smart. They have to learn to be stupid."

"Well, *hamsters* aren't resurrected." Aunt Ruth Ann sounded sure.

"Who says?"

"Everyone ready?" It was Uncle Gus's voice. Maren hadn't heard the jeep. She stuffed the dandelion chain into her shorts pocket, rolled to her feet, and raced around the side of the house. Jill was in back, her legs dangling over the license plate. Len was sitting in the driver's seat. He had on a red and white baseball cap, and he lifted it off by the bill and blew inside.

"Pa let me drive," he bragged.

"Aw, he did not," said Maren. "You're only thirteen."

"He did too."

"Did he, Jill?"

"I wouldn't know," said Jill. "I didn't notice."

"You kids corpses?" Uncle Gus was carrying a box of fruit jars towards the jeep. Uncle Gus had a limp he got in Guam in the war. "Go get some bookets."

"Bouquets, Pa!" said Jill.

"Bookets Jill," said Uncle Gus.

Maren tugged on his sleeve. "Did you let Len drive?"

"Don't you worry your head, little lady," he said. "Just go get some flowers."

Maren and Jill sat in the back of the jeep to make sure none of the bouquets fell onto the road. Under the damp blanket, the flowers were sweet-smelling and pretty. Maren peeked at them and sniffed. Jill slid over closer to her. Jill smelled spicy and sweet, like the snapdragons. "You got any boyfriends?" she asked.

"No," Maren stared at her. "Do *you*?"

"Of course. All the girls in the fifth grade have boyfriends."

"They do?" Maren swallowed. "Who's your boyfriend?"

"Eddie Werner."

Jill had painted toenails and fingernails. Maren looked at her own fingernails, uncolored except for green dandelion stains. She had on Keds, not sandals, and inside the Keds, her toenails were plain too. She looked back over at Jill. "What do you do with him? This Eddie."

"Just things," Jill said. "He gave me this." She pulled out the collar of her blouse and showed off a poodle pin with red rhinestone eyes. "Don't you know any boys?"

"Sure," Maren said. "I mean in the fourth grade there are boys. But they're just boys."

"Wait till the fifth grade." Jill fingered her pin. "That's when you get boyfriends."

The girls slid off the jeep at the Logan Cemetery. Mom and Aunt Ruth Ann sorted through the flowers while Aunt Carrie fanned

herself with a *Photoplay* magazine and the great aunts emerged like moths out of their backseat cocoons. The biggest bouquet was for Grandma's grave. Mom grasped Maren's hand and led the way to the marker. Maren tried to wriggle loose. Jill checked her face in the jeep side mirror and then walked towards them, one foot placed carefully in front of the other like a ballerina Maren had seen once in *The Nutcracker*. Aunt Ruth Ann had hold of Grandpa's elbow.

"Think about Grandma now," Mom said.

She sighed. "She loved you very much. How she'd have liked to see you grow up." She wiped her cheek with the back of her hand.

Maren wasn't sure she wanted to think of Grandma. How did spirits work, anyway? Did they swoop around keeping an eye on their grandchildren? Could Grandma see her when she stole sugar cubes out of the pantry and cherries off Mrs. Albert's tree? Did Grandma know what she was thinking?

Dad brought a fruit jar that he'd filled up with water from a tap, and Mom let go of Maren to put the flowers in the jar. The grave marker was a book with two open pages. On one page was printed Grandma's name, Anna Maren Mikelsen Jensen, then June 14, 1888, her birth date, then September 10, 1950. Maren remembered the day. She'd only been in the fourth grade for a week. Dad wrote Mrs. Fielding a note so she could miss two days of school, and they drove straight up to Logan. Mom was already there.

On the other gravestone page was Grandpa's name, Alfred George Jensen, and just one date, March 5, 1888. The bottom was empty. "You're her youngest grandchild," said Mom. She squeezed Maren and whispered, "The last and the best."

Grandma had worn navy blue hats and brooches and dresses that came way down her legs and she had smelled like powder. In the casket she had on a white dress, her temple dress, Mom had said, and her wrinkled cheeks had been rouged the way they were in real life. Soon, according to Dad, she'd be all crumbly and dark.

Grandpa was dressed up as if he were going to church—the way he was at the funeral. Usually he wore overalls. Now he took off his hat and knelt down by the marker. He brushed off a few leaves. Aunt Ruth Ann helped him get back up again. "Annie was a great lady," said one of the great-uncles, Moroni or Moses, Maren couldn't keep them straight. "It was 'count of her we could go to school," said the other one. "Her and that old treadle," said the first great uncle. Everyone was quiet for a minute or two.

"Now for Herb." Mom cleared her throat and wiped her other cheek. Herb was Aunt Carrie's last husband. He had died way before Grandma, of a heart attack. Maren remembered.

Uncle Herb. His stomach had hung out over his trousers—a beer belly, they'd called it, even

if he didn't drink beer.

"Over here," said Dad. He thought it was funny that Aunt Carrie couldn't find Herb's grave herself. Aunt Carrie was Mom and Aunt Ruth Ann's oldest sister, and she dyed her hair and wore shoes with pointy heels. Mom and Aunt Ruth Ann were always exchanging looks behind her back. Aunt Carrie had never learned to drive so she never came to the cemetery by herself. There was a double marker over Uncle Herb's grave too, but nothing was written on Aunt Carrie's side.

"Are you going to put your name and birthday here?" Maren asked.

"Not till I'm gone," Aunt Carrie said, "and then just my name and the date I go." She winked at Maren. "It's nobody's business how old I am. Besides, I've been thinking"—she smoothed back her straw-colored hair and her big earring hoops bumped her neck—"maybe I'd rather be buried next to Jasper."

"Jasper!" hooted Dad. They trooped through the markers carrying Uncle Jasper's flowers. Aunt Carrie could never find that grave either. It was about a block from Uncle Herb's.

"Jasper wasn't a good husband to you." Aunt Ruth Ann had hold of Aunt Carrie's elbow now. Aunt Carrie had divorced Uncle Jasper years ago, before Maren was even born, but she'd heard them talk one night about how he'd been killed in a fight with another man. There was just one small, flat marker on Uncle Jasper's grave, and Aunt Carrie knelt down and put a jar of flowers on it.

"He was the father of my children." Aunt Carrie arranged the flowers.

"And where are her children now?" hussed Aunt Ruth Ann to Mom. Aunt Carrie's son Darrell was in the Navy, but Mom and Aunt Ruth Ann had done some whispering about him before he went, and they said her daughter Lila lived off in California with her husband and almost never came home.

"I should think you'd want to be buried next to Herb," Mom said. "He did more raisin' of Darrell and Lila than Jasper did."

"I don't know." Aunt Carrie stood up, wobbling a little on her pointy heels and looking at the grave.

Great-aunt Alma was fixing flowers back by the cars. "Look it here!" she called. "No one has been watching after Louise and Frank." She motioned towards the weedy grave.

"And depend on Amy and Lou to not even show up today," said Aunt Ruth Ann.

"We've got extra flowers." Mom headed towards the jeep. "We've got enough to leave Frank and Louise some." Maren stole a glance at Len, who hadn't bothered to get out of the front seat. He looked as if he were sleeping, his cap pulled over his face. She bet he was wide awake.

She didn't say anything as the jeep bounced along to Smithfield. She stroked her legs, already brown though school had just let out

for the summer and she hadn't started going to the park yet. She thought about boys. Who could be her boyfriend? Michael Denney was kind of nice. He was about the only boy in the class who was taller than she was. She was tall, Mom said, because Dad was so tall. She was taller than Jill even if Jill was a year and a half older. Her friend Sheila said that Jimmy Whitlock liked her, but Jimmy Whitlock was little and fat and always wore striped t-shirts. She couldn't have Jimmy Whitlock for a boyfriend. She wanted a boyfriend who looked like Len. Len was tall but not so chunky as Michael Denney. Len walked like a cowboy. Maybe she could find a boyfriend from the sixth grade. Jill would be impressed by that.

Jill poked her. "I know where babies come from," she whispered.

"I do too," Maren said.

"Where?"

"From mothers' tummies."

"They don't come from tummies," said Jill scornfully. "They come from uteruses."

"Well, down there by tummies," Maren said.

"Do you know how it happens?"

Maren repeated what Mom had told her.

"The husband plants a seed in the wife."

"It doesn't have to be the husband," Jill laughed. "It could be any man. Or any boy after he's 14."

"Not just the husband?"

"Shh!" Jill said. They both looked over their shoulders. Len was leaning over the back of his seat. "Turn around, smarty," Jill told him. He snickered, but he turned around. Jill paused.

"Do you know *how* the man plants the seed?"

Maren was silent. That part of the explanation had not been very clear. Mom hadn't seemed to want to talk about it very long.

"How do *you* know?" she asked.

"I'm almost eleven," said Jill.

The jeep jolted to a stop. Jill whispered, "I'll tell you tonight."

The great-grand parents on Grandma's side were buried in Smithfield. Mom and Aunt Ruth Ann and the rest were already there waiting for the flowers. "Got stuck behind that tractor," Uncle Gus grumbled.

"Look how old." Mom pointed out the gravestones to Maren. "You and Jill see if you can find the oldest stone here. We ought to have the names and dates made darker," she said to Aunt Ruth Ann. "They can do that, can't they?"

"This one was born in 1804." Maren traced the numbers with her finger. "And this one was born in 1797!" She heard Jill giggle and looked around. "Where are you?" she shouted. Mom scowled and put her finger to her mouth.

"Try and find me," Jill answered.

Her voice seemed to come from behind the big gravestone, the one that looked like a table, over by the tree. Maren sneaked up and peered around the side. Not there. She raced over to an even bigger stone and then to one beyond that. She heard giggling down by the ditch. She crept quietly, making sure she didn't give herself away. She was just about to shout, "Got ya!" when she saw it wasn't Jill at all. It was another girl, an older girl, and she didn't have a blouse on, and a dark-skinned boy was sitting close behind her and unhooking her bra.

Maren swallowed and took a step backwards, just one step. "Maren!" she heard Jill call from over by the big marker. She got just a glimpse of the boy massaging the girl's breasts, and then she turned towards Jill's voice. "Where've you been?" Jill demanded.

"Just looking for you."

"Didn't find me though, did ya?"

Maren shook her head.



Maren wasn't sure she wanted to think of Grandma.

How did spirits work, anyway? Did they swoop

around keeping an eye on their grandchildren? Could

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pantry and cherries off of Mrs. Albert's tree? Did

Grandma know what she was thinking?

Back in the jeep, Jill sidled up close to her again. "Do you want a lot of babies when you get married?"

"I don't know," Maren said. "Do you?"

"Yes." Jill began braiding Maren's hair. "I want a lot of babies. Maybe six or seven."

"When do you want to get married?"

"Oh, maybe when I'm 17." She pulled the hair tight and Maren winced. "Seventeen sounds like a good age if you're going to have lots of babies. My mom was 19, and she had four babies. Your mom was 27, you know. Maybe that's why she only had you."

"She says she can't have any more."

"That's because she was so old when she got married. Stop wiggling."

"No, it's not." Maren tried to hold still

"She says it's because she has little bumps inside her."

"Well, she probably has the little bumps because she was so old when she got married. There." She finished braiding. "I don't have an elastic, though. Can you wear lipstick yet?"

"No," breathed Maren. "Can you?"

"I'm not supposed to, but I have one. See?" She pulled out of her pocket a little gold tube and screwed out the waxy orange stick.

"Can I try some on?"

"Tonight," said Jill.

Grandpa's people were in the Newton cemetery. "Last stop!" Uncle Gus said when he pulled the jeep over under a tree. There were only a few bouquets left. Grandpa and Aunt Ruth Ann were strolling among the graves, pointing at some and talking. Aunt Carrie was sitting in the Oldsmobile with the door open and her bare feet in the grass. Mom and Dad were helping the great-uncles and aunts out of the cars. "Your grandpa probably knows everyone here." Uncle Gus chewed on a twig. Mom said he did that to keep himself from smoking.

"Grandpa!" Jill called. He and Aunt Ruth Ann waited for them. Jill tugged on his thumb. "Grandpa, do you know everyone here?"

"Pretty nearly."

"Who's that?" Jill pointed to a grave at random.

"Anton Rasmussen," said Grandpa promptly. He wagged Maren's new braid, already loosening because they hadn't had a tie.

"Was he your friend?"

"No. He was the father of my friend Hyrum. He's been gone fifty years."

"Fifty-four," Aunt Ruth Ann said, reading the marker through the bottom of her glasses.

"Come on, Maren," said Jill. "Let's go see if the beehives are still here!"

Maren looked down to see a stone lamb curled up atop a tiny marker.

"That's a love baby's grave," Jill explained.

"Oh," Maren said. She decided she wouldn't ask.

The beehives and the hole in the fence and the high grass were in the same place as last year. Jill picked two daisies and gave one to Maren.

"Think of the boy you want for your boyfriend," Jill said, "and see if he loves you."

They stretched out in the back of the empty jeep and pulled petals off the daisies. Maren tried to think who could be her boyfriend.

"What were you doing out there with the birds and bees?" Len flipped a twig at Jill.

"Learning all about it?"

"Aw, shove off, Len." Jill pulled off the last petal. "He loves me," she said. "How about yours?"

"Mine came out wrong," said Maren, "but it's okay because I don't have anybody yet anyway."

"You will," Jill said, "when you're older." She closed her eyes. Her pale eyelashes almost disappeared against the freckles of her cheek.

Dad waved as he got into a car next to Aunt Carrie. "See you back at the house, Gus!" he called. The jeep brought up the rear of the caravan leaving the cemetery, but Uncle Gus stopped as the cars went on down the road. He turned around. "Want to stop at the Dairy Queen?" he asked.

"Yeah!" they said. Even Len said, "Yeah!"

Maren lay back and watched the blue sky. When they got to Uncle Gus's house, Aunt Ruth Ann would feed everybody fried chicken and canned pear pie, and the adults would talk about the dead people and Dad and Uncle Gus

would play cribbage in the kitchen. Jill would go across the street to get Arlene and Dennis Sewell, and they'd hide from each other in all the big backyards and ditches and sheds, and when it got *really* dark and Aunt Ruth Ann called them in, they'd bring out the Canasta cards and the Monopoly board. But probably this year Len would think he was too big to play Canasta and Monopoly.

When Mom and Dad went back to Grandpa's, Maren would get to sleep on the second bed in Jill's room, the bed Jill's sister Annie slept in when she lived at home. But first there would be milk and cookies and prayers in the kitchen with Aunt Ruth Ann and Uncle Gus and Len, and then Len would go down to his room in the basement and Maren and Jill would go upstairs. They'd try on the lipstick in front of Jill's mirror and scrub it all off with cold cream and Kleenexes. They'd turn off the lights when Aunt Ruth Ann would holler at them, and they'd crawl into their beds, but they'd stay awake late talking about boyfriends and babies and how to be beautiful.

■



Chicago Poems IV

"You seem to have difficulty with boundaries," she says,
peering down through lower lens of bifocal

"Any kind of boundaries,
anywhere."

"Of course," I scream
How does one have boundaries
Raised in space
Stretching flat from the Ohio
to the Mississippi and across
Nebraska

What limit there?
What boundary?
How does one imagine
shape to the sky
Or definition to the soul

When the earth stretches
flat as Kansas
Lower than the sea
Where east and west are mysteries
lost in the thicket of forest
Or height of grain
or length of straight, level road?
Boundaries escape
Even physical attempts
Who cannot ride a bicycle on and on
over orderly ground
Or walk mile after mile of even concrete
Or run through suburbs winding only left and right,
never down or up
Boundaries are for weaklings
Dictionaries for their souls
I choose to fly the land of my birthright
Limitless, mesmerizing,
flat plane of August.

Shari S. Crall
Temecula, California

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Grandma

Remembering a Woman with Nine Lives

Lynda D. Avery
Massena, New York

My grandmother, Manetta Prince Henrie, died when she was just a month short of 102. She was bedridden, slept most of the time, did very little for herself, hallucinated sometimes, didn't hear well, and didn't talk much. But I remember a different Grandma.

My earliest recollections of Grandma are intertwined with her home on 3rd East and 7th North in Provo, Utah, just a block from the BYU hill. When times were hard for my parents—during college days for my dad, when he was getting his Master's degree, between jobs—we lived in the apartment. My grandparents were always willing to help their children in times of need, and almost all of their six children moved into the apartment at one time or another when they needed help. There was a big laundry room with a huge old gas stove where Grandma did all her canning (as well as canning for many family members), and two storage rooms for soap and canned fruit and vegetables. In an upstairs closet was an abandoned laundry chute where we kids could look down on Grandma working in the basement and, of course, she never knew we were there!

My grandmother was an attractive woman with short, dark hair that was graying in my earliest memories of her. She wore it waved back. She was never a very heavy woman but didn't have the curves of a young woman. She had borne six children and didn't try to hide the fact. She always wore dresses—house dresses or nice, silky ones, depending on the occasion, and unless she was going out, there was always an apron over her dress—the old fashioned ones that really covered you up. She had a lovely smile and used it often. She was vital and alive and very seldom quiet.

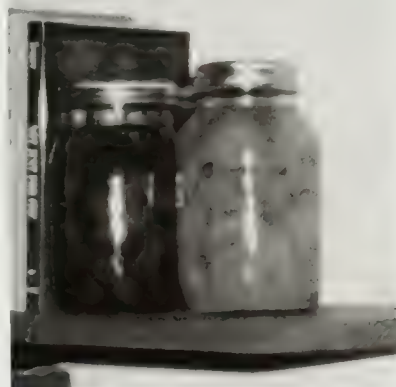
My memories of Grandma are also intertwined with food. I could always count on finding a large pan with layers of whole wheat raisin cookies, separated with waxed paper, in one of the cupboards. She made wonderful homemade bread and delicious ham and bean soup and chicken and homemade noodles that made your mouth water just to think about them. I always got to "shake out" the noodles after they were rolled cut, jelly-roll style. Then they were laid out on a clean dish towel to dry before being dropped into the chicken broth.

My grandfather often went to Southern Utah to sell insurance. He also took his fishing-boat motor and fishing equipment and always came back with a "mess" of trout. Then Grandma would have us over for a fish fry. She would fry the trout in real butter and serve it with the most marvelous biscuits. We didn't need anything else to make a feast!

During high school, Grandma's house was on my way home. I almost always stopped to visit and grab a cookie. Many times, Grandma

was home alone while Grandpa was on an insurance-selling trip. She was usually at her desk in the back bedroom, working on her genealogy. She had many big legal-sized books full of genealogical research that she had completed. Many of these earlier records were hand-written. Later, she taught herself to type and began typing the record sheets and histories. She compiled a large history of her grandfather's descendants, the John D. Lee family. Through her research, she provided the way for many of her ancestors to have their temple ordinances completed.

She was also an instrument in having John D. Lee absolved of the blame for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a cause that meant a great deal to her. Great Grandfather Lee was the scapegoat for this massacre and was executed at



the Meadows, even though he was not the leader or the person responsible. In the summer of 1990, descendants of John D. Lee and the people on the wagon train had a reunion, and many hurts were put to rest. A new monument was put in place at the Meadows, and I'm sure Grandma was there in spirit.

Grandma loved cleanliness. I helped "spring-clean" the apartment downstairs many times. She always paid me to do things like that, and she usually worked right along with me. She also had many talents. She had been a school teacher when she was quite young and taught school as a young mother in order to keep Grandpa on a mission to Samoa.

When Grandpa died just two months after my oldest daughter, Susan, was born, Grandma fell apart. We were all surprised. We thought Grandma was so strong, and she had always said that Grandpa would have to die first because he wouldn't be able to take care of himself if she died first. So it came as a shock when Grandma felt she couldn't stay in the house alone. After

all, she had spent many days and nights alone when Grandpa was on his trips. Eventually, she made the decision to move to our house.

My dad built a large room and bathroom onto our house for her. She loaned Mom and Dad the money for the room, and the loan was then deducted from her rent until it was paid. She insisted on paying rent to my parents. She loved to do the family ironing and the dishes. Grandma always said she loved to wash dishes. The hot water felt soothing to her rheumatic hands, and she found great joy in the task. There was plenty of space in her room for quilting, and she was always busy cutting out blocks and putting them together. She also wrote histories. One of those was the story of her parents' lives, which I typed for her. It was copied and bound for the family members.

There was a big laundry room with a huge old gas stove where Grandma did all her canning, and two storage rooms for soap and both home and store bought canned fruit and vegetables.

My grandmother was born in the pioneer era. She had the most fascinating stories to tell. She remembered things that had happened fifty or sixty years before, including people's names. She made us see the things that had happened. She saw life evolve from the horse & buggy days (she sat a horse beautifully and loved to ride) to jet planes and walks on the moon and took it all in stride, excited about all the new changes. When she was young, she was a real tomboy. Her father was concerned about her riding horses in a long cumbersome skirt, so he told Great Grandma to make her a pair of pantaloons that she could wear for riding. At first they caused quite a scandal, but by the end of the summer Great Grandma had made a pair for almost all the girls in the valley. She always said she had been given nine lives, and she used several of them in escapades with horses.

My grandmother died when she was a month short of 102. She was old and frail, slept a lot and didn't say much, but I remember a different grandmother. ■



The Woman's Exponent began in 1872 as a semi-monthly journal "owned by, controlled by, and edited by Utah ladies" in Salt Lake City, Utah. A yearly subscription cost \$2.00. The paper was published until February 1914.

The following excerpt was published in the The Woman's Exponent, Feb. 1, 1874.

STRONG-MINDED WOMEN.

Mrs. Mary I. Horne, President of the 14th Ward Relief Society, and also of the Co-operative Retrenchment Associations in this city, considers herself a strong-minded woman. Not, she says, in the common acceptance of the term, but in taking the words for what they really mean. She thinks that any woman who lives above reproach in all respects, who honors her calling as a wife and mother and who seeks to assist in the bringing forth of reforms, calculated to benefit and bless mankind, may justly be considered strong-minded, and that there is no stigma attached to the term when applied to such. We heartily concur in these sentiments. Some weeks since, one of the agents for the *Exponent* called upon us. While in conversation, she remarked that a lady to whom she had offered the *Exponent* rejected it, saying that she was not a "strong-minded woman." We agreed that she could not have been. And when our visitor asked if we considered her the agent—a strong-minded woman, we unintentionally gave her an unpleasant feeling, by readily replying in the affirmative.

In our estimation, it is not the strongest or greatest minds of the earth, that are continually reaching after something which they do not possess, while neglecting to make proper use of blessings and privileges within their reach. But even these, though mistaken in their aims, we regard as not so weak as those who do not undertake to learn their duties as social beings on the earth. Who neither possess ambition to accomplish the good which lies within their power to do, nor to advance to higher pursuits.

If woman, to perform her mission wisely, must work as well as man, it is as much her duty to think as it is his. And if she must observe all laws as he must, she has as great need to understand them, and as much right to assist in framing them.

CyberSpace

The New Frontier for the Pioneering Mormon Woman

Kristen Graves
Cambridge, Massachusetts

"Just what are you young Mormon women interested in these days?" a 50-year-old non-LDS friend asked me recently. If she had been following the news this summer, she might have read of the Pioneer trek reenactment taking place in the West or the Boston temple dedication. Or if we'd had previous conversations, she might know about my friends who participated in the Hill Cumorah Pageant or who were serving missions. Not knowing what distinguishes young Mormon women from other young women in the world, she had no idea the impossibility of the question she was posing.

I decided to conduct an informal poll among friends of mine. I asked a co-worker of mine, who also happens to be LDS, what she was interested in. She looked up from her computer and joked, "Email. It makes my day when I get e-mail."

True, e-mail, especially personal e-mail received at work, does spice up the day. Often at work, nothing is more welcome than a message coming up on our screens, pulling us out of the tasks at hand, leaving work for a few moments to respond to more personal matters, even if the e-mail was only a chain letter or the 83rd forwarding of a particularly funny David Letterman Top 10 list.

From personal experience, I knew this to be true. I use e-mail, not just to take a break from work and deadlines, but to take care of personal and, yes, even church, business. For the past year, my bishop and I have been taking care of business for my calling through e-mail; last week was the first time we actually had a face-to-face "interview." My co-chair of the Interfaith Committee and I take care of most of our business via e-mail, occasionally meeting "in the flesh" for dinner and a more extensive chat, only to wrap up our conversation with a few more e-mail notes.

Email is more formal than simple conversation, and so it allows for an eloquence of thought that might not happen in the transience of spoken language. And because e-mail is also convenient, it can accommodate the randomness of a conversation and also can provide a way to tie up the loose ends of an exchange that occurred a few days or weeks before.

Recently, I found myself on a Monday morning trying to put aside the embarrassment of having delivered a particularly dismal Relief Society lesson. I hadn't had a chance to share the thoughts I had in mind for the discussion, which, in my typical humility, I felt would have really improved the lesson.

Sometime in the middle of this Monday morning, I received an e-mail from a friend who was present that Sunday. Here was my chance to fix things, to edit the past, I thought. The conversation that ensued was not, it turned out, merely a chance to share my true thoughts on the subject, but also a way to share with

someone else my testimony and struggles and to learn of hers as well—an encounter that probably wouldn't have occurred in a large class setting at church.

Kate: thanks for your lesson the other day. i didn't contribute much—but it gave me lots to think about...

Me: actually didn't think the lesson went well at all. was trying to get folks to think about why/how we serve people. seems we like to engage people on our own terms instead of trying to meet their needs--shows up in relationships all over (missionary work, service, visiting teaching . . .) think we want something easy--not too messy--that doesn't require huge investment of ourselves. but _also_ something that 'counts' in celestial kingdom points.

Kate: love what you wrote about service b/c it's true and lately it's been kinda big issue with me. It's tempting to think that if service is inconvenient (like my visit-teachee being really hard to reach) it's not meant to be--the Lord doesn't really care if i don't do it. ...that's even more appalling recorded on this screen than it was in my mind.

Me: you know, in mormonism seems heaven's a bribe, like: if you do these things, you will go to heaven. think our motivation becomes extrinsic and we do things b/c we think we have to do them to get there, not b/c they have intrinsic value. and THEN we lose interest entirely in the value and do work that doesn't really accomplish much. soooo, we do service that serves US--easy service so we can do something, w/o necessarily meeting the needs of the people we're "serving" . . .

Kate: yes! i semi-consciously do that--don't think i'm the only one. scares me how satisfied i can feel about my level of spirituality when i'm really not living basic principles of

discipleship. even felt reprimanded at the temple this week.

Me: think it's b/c secretly we want the easy way out--like flattering ourselves we're the good samaritan when we're really like the priest--in a hurry to get to religious duties and so worried abt keeping clean from the world--missing the whole point.

Often I have thought that e-mail is a way to portray a more honest you: a mad you >:-) a happy you :-) a teasing you :-): Email is a fun way to let someone know you are thinking of her and is a way of writing and sharing yourself that can more easily reveal your personality I have one friend whose e-mail letters are a tapestry of words sewn together by phrases of punctuation marks, e-mail smiles, abbreviations, and interjections that are common in conversation but would be considered bad form for formal writing. If one is skilled at writing, e-mail provides a way to show off one's wit and facility with the language

As my co-worker and I continued our conversation about Mormons and women (and, inevitably, of men), we discussed the most current news of the Church's celebration of the Mormon trek to the Salt Lake valley. In her typical sardonic way, my friend quipped that she couldn't understand why, after all these decades of progress (technological and social, to point out a few), we even cared to go back to try to relive the hardships of the trek: the devastation, illness, coldness. Why that, she questioned, when we have modern-day pioneers?

True, the reenactment brought us closer together as a church community and helped strengthen our bond and devotion to our heritage. But many people who join the church these days make different but just as difficult sacrifices as did the pioneers

And so for me, being a modern-day pioneer isn't just about using modern-day technology to accomplish my calling or to strengthen my relationships with friends and family. It isn't even about doing missionary work via e-mail (which I do from time to time)

Being a modern-day pioneer might certainly encompass using these aids and conveniences, but nothing substitutes or even effectively facilitates the physical reaching out to those in my charge. No combination of punctuation marks, interjections, and love letters can compensate for a hug, a long dinner conversation, a kiss. There are times during the day when I simply must pick up the phone to call a friend in need or to hear her laughter. And so inevitably, at the end of these e-mail letters is a P.S. "Let's

meet for dinner sometime to talk this through," or "call me tonight."

Email is fun and honest and convenient, but as "virtual reality" it is only that: it is not reality. Email is a safe place, where things can be controlled and where you send your message after it has been revised and edited a few times

And this is where I see myself enacting the legacy of our pioneer forerunners. It wasn't enough to believe in God and receive a testimony of his blessings. These pioneers had to put their thoughts into action, some giving up the comforts and securities of home to engage their faith with reality, hardship, death, illness, and back-breaking work. As a result of their faith and personal responsibility through action, they were blessed beyond measure, and no amount of reenactment of ours can replicate the collective faith and experience of these brave men and women

But we have our own challenges and must step up to the call of our faith. We may not have to drag a wagon across the desert in what can only be called a long and horrifying camping trip, but we too have to translate faith into action when it is easier and cleaner to e-mail or voice mail

One friend of mine was ecstatic over receiving a postcard in the mail from me. "Real mail!" she said. True, but it wasn't the real me. I was too busy at work (on my computer) to spend time with her. Was I really fulfilling a

need? How did I know what was going on in her life? I hadn't taken the time to spend real time as the real me with the real her. Email is just one way we can take ourselves into the future, and the future is a step in the right direction—as long as we follow it through with our hearts and our actions, using it as an aid to God and our brothers and sisters.

So when I responded to my fifty-year-old friend's question, I did so with the intellectual and spiritual passion that is characteristic of most of the Mormon young women I know these days. I did describe the social forces that surround me, in and out of the church, that threaten my goals and dreams for myself and my sisters. I talked about the tension I have experienced between intellectualism and faith, between generations and personalities of Mormon women, between meeting the expectations I have for myself and the expectations other people have for me, between responding to personal responsibility and loyalty to the church. But mostly I confessed that my challenge was in maintaining the appropriate balance between what I believe and what I then must do, of knowing when to act, and also when not to act, when to question and also when to settle into resolve.

What are Mormon women interested in? Living life with our hearts and our minds through faith and service, with or without software. We're wired pioneers. ■



For My Mother

May 19, 1995

The potter
before her wheel
gathers the sterile dust
and moistens it
with her own sweat
giving of herself
creating clay out of it
without shape nor prejudices
and goes about working it
pawning her own soul into it
forging her great masterpiece
with her weary hands
she forms it, caresses it
she gives it life and death
and when it is completed
she stands with empty hands.

Diane Graves
Beaverton, Oregon

goodness gracious

Shine On, Sweet Dreams

Linda Hoffman Kimball
Belmont, Massachusetts

My three-month-old daughter Britta keeps saying rude things to people. "Get outta my face, mister." "What a ridiculous outfit!" "Go away. You bother me." One friend of ours, amazed at my tiny daughter's way with words, asks, "How is it that a baby so young can speak, in complete sentences no less?" Britta smiles up at him and announces beautifully, "It's a spiritual gift from God."

That was one real dream I had. There's also the one about exuberant cows galloping over fields backlit by a fluorescent sunrise. Or the one where I tell off a frisky Soviet sheriff. Or the one where elephants march on castle balustrades. And there's the one about the heart-shaped bar of soap . . . but that's another story. These are sweet dreams. Ones that make me chuckle or feel triumphant or muse on ironies. Ones that make me want to get up in the morning and keep my eye out for galloping cows.

I love hearing about others' wild, cheerful dreams. My friend Diane has extremely vivid dreams. Some of them are cheerful. One involved my dog Worthy. He's a 115-pound Bernese Mountain Dog—big, black, and hairy. In Diane's dream he's on his hind legs, dressed in a bright orange suit—matching skirt and jacket—with a pill box hat (think Jackie O). He

hops into the driver's seat of a red pickup and speeds off with the cargo, a truckload of brilliant jelly beans. I stand in the driveway yelling at my children, "Don't just stand there, go after him!" I love that dream of Diane's. I can almost hear the wheels squeal as he peels out of the driveway.

One night, not long after my mother died, my then 8-year-old son Chase came into my room in the middle of the night upset by a nightmare. I was in my own sleepy haze. I remember him telling me something about a line-up of little Lego people, one of whom is clearly my mom. Standing in a line, like the little military set-ups he often made, the piece that is my mom coughs, wobbles, and falls over flat on her little plastic face. Chase was so shaken. Still raw from my loss, I cried with him. Grieving and consoling each other, we both eventually went back to sleep.

The next morning when I spoke to him about the dream, he didn't know what I was talking about. "That was YOUR dream, Mom. I never dreamed that," he insisted.

"But what about the Lego people? What about the coughing and the wobbling and the falling over?"

"Your dream, Mom."

We still debate this. He says I tell it with

other flourishes—something about a rubber duck with a Lego person on its back. But you know, Legos and rubber ducks are images his subconscious stews in more than mine does. Just like Jesus used sheep and olive trees for his hangers-on back then, Chase would more likely use Legos and rubber ducks than I would. I, on the other hand, must have real problems because my subconscious apparently marinates in galloping cows and elephants on parade.

Chase and I are stuck with this dilemma. Whose dream was it anyway?

At this point, the word *dream* morphs into other meanings. For example, if I were to impose on my daughter a "dream" to be a tennis pro and she is wired for a life as a carpenter, whose dream is it anyway? In the movie *Shine*, one sees what can happen when dream ownership runs amok. In that case, poor David Helfgott pays the price for his father's inability to distinguish such boundaries. What about those "dreams" I really do share, like Martin Luther King's, "that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: I hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal." I like the idea of group dreams. It's an intriguing concept to me.

A few months ago, I had a provocative dream, one Jung would have been proud of. In

Sisters Speak

To Have (more children), or Not to Have?

Robin Zenger Baker
Belmont, Massachusetts

Shortly after giving birth to my third child, I was at the playground with all three of my children. One mother, a woman I hadn't met before, struck up a conversation with me. Her children were one and three years old. She asked: Was life a lot more difficult with three children? How was I handling it? My kids? My husband? How did I feel about how close the kids were in age? Did I have any time left over for myself?

She said she'd love to have more children, but didn't think her husband would go along with the idea. She wished she could convince him. She'd come from a large family and hoped her children could have a similar experience.

I went home from the park that day musing on how frequently I had been in conversations with people about the intimate topics of family size and bringing children into the world. And if women talk about family size so frequently, how much more often do we think about it? My guess is that during a certain period of life, many hours are spent thinking about whether to add additional children to our families. Yet,

writing on this topic is remarkably scarce.

Now I have four children. My last pregnancy at age 36 was not much fun. My varicose veins were bad enough that I had to wear prescription support hose which felt like a straight jacket for the bottom half of my body. Because I was over the magical age of 35, I was a candidate for amniocentesis, a test to help determine whether my child would have one of the genetic abnormalities which was more likely in an older mother. This test introduced into the pregnancy a new degree of worry while waiting for results.

I gave birth to a third daughter, making our family three girls and one boy. During this pregnancy, I was confident that this would be my last child. I was never going to do this again. I didn't want the discomfort of pregnancy, the pain and trauma of delivery, the incredible exhaustion of caring for a tiny baby, the years of trying to meet the needs of a fifth child sandwiched in between meeting the needs of the other four. I also felt that four children was the perfect family size for me. Yet my neighbor

(non-Mormon, no less) patted me on the shoulder at a recent school function and said she thought I was destined for one more, throwing my certainty to the winds. Now that my baby is two, friends have quizzed me: "How will your son feel being the only boy in the family? Are you thinking about another? If you could guarantee it would be a boy would you get pregnant?" My husband, believing that ultimately, the final decision is mine, asks me the same questions.

I remember asking myself the same questions after having two children. I kept thinking to myself—two children is such a nice number of children. It's so civilized! You can take them so many places—out to restaurants, on fun trips, on airplanes. You can afford nice things for them. You can give them a lot of attention. You're not outnumbered!

I often wonder how other people have come to terms with their family size. Our bishop's wife has four children. Once I heard her describe how after having three children in a row less than two years apart, she decided to sit

reality, someone I held in high regard faced possible censure in a church context. This weighed on me enormously. The details of the dream I had are too fuzzy to recall except for one word at the end. It was someone's name, but in the dream it clearly wasn't intended to be just a name. It was a refrain. Over and over again. "Helfgott! Helfgott! Helfgott!"

Having had some years of German, I found this oh-so-interesting. Was the refrain a desperate, petitionary prayer: "Help, God!"? Or a reminder of divine intervention: "God helps!"? Or perhaps a call to action: "(Linda,) help God!"? For me it was all of the above. (In this particular instance the destroying angel passed over, *Gott sei Dank*.) That little triad burbling up from my sub-conscious now infuses my conscious thoughts and actions. I think of it as a spiritual gift from God.

Which brings me back to the dream with baby Britta. It seems to me there's stewardship involved here. For one thing, one doesn't use spiritual gifts from God to be sassy or do harm. No, no, never, never, uh, uh, uh. For another thing, it is only with permission that I share Diane's jelly bean dream. Dreams are private things and not to be trotted out for all to see. It's a kind of intimacy to share such things, so take care with them and don't be flip. I once

told someone about a profound spiritual experience that happened while I was sleeping (I won't even call it a dream), and this person's response was "Yeah, I always have weird dreams after I eat beef." Sometimes people just don't get it.

Be willing to think about your dreams. Most are run-off, the debris of the day. But sometimes they are mutant messages down under, to borrow a phrase. Maybe just something fun. Maybe something important. Joseph managed to make a career opportunity out of it with Pharaoh, after all.

Now, about those galloping cows. Hey, maybe those lean years are a long way off!



This is the first in the new column, goodness gracious by Linda Hoffman Kimball. Feel free to send her your comments or thoughts (or even dreams) to:

LHK's goodness gracious

Exponent II

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Or email Linda Hoffman Kimball at:

lhkimball@aol.com

with the subject "goodness gracious."

back for a few years and take things a bit slower. Her last child was born four years later, and now that he's seven years old, she seems completely comfortable with her family size. This story was helpful for me to hear. Yet many women in my ward seem to struggle with this issue. Some have tried to have more children, and have had to deal with infertility or repeated miscarriages. In one particularly painful situation, a would-be mother suffered many miscarriages, finally achieving a pregnancy which lasted five months. One week after making the happy announcement, she miscarried again. At that point, she decided her family size was complete.

Many women I know have dogs just a bit younger than the youngest child. Perhaps this is their way of coping with the finality of their family size.

Recently, I was chatting with my sister-in-law. Her youngest child had just turned one and was beginning to walk and talk. She told me she feels like her baby is gone and it's time for another. She also feels like she needs to wait

until they can afford a bigger house and car. This conversation supports my suspicion that not only do we talk about this topic frequently, we think about it constantly during certain periods of our lives. It certainly comes up at every family reunion with all ten of my siblings between the ages of 28 and 40!

How did you decide how many children to add to your family? Was it a difficult decision? Did you ever reconsider? Do you have regrets? How have you come to terms with your family size? We would love to hear from people with the whole gamut of family sizes.

Please respond to Sisters Speak editor, Judy Dushku, at:

Sisters Speak

Exponent II

P.O. Box 128

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Book Reviews

Worth Their Salt: Notable but Often Unnoted Women of Utah

Colleen Whitley, Editor

Utah State University Press, 1996, 308 pages

Debra Blakely

Western Springs, Illinois

This book is not a "page-turner." It is, however, a valuable collection of biographical sketches and a book to be read slowly, savoring a section at a time. Better yet, to "cherry-pick" through, picking out the biographies of women who seem particularly interesting.

This collection begins with a moving account of Patty Bartlett Sessions, the pioneer midwife who came alive in Donna Smart's fond remembrance. Smart drew on a 42-year daily record, beginning in 1846, so she frequently provides us with Patty's own words and explanations. Patty's abhorrence of idleness may explain my feeling of exhaustion as I considered her almost constant industry, as well as why I was so amused when Donna recorded that Patty's descendants secretly unraveled the socks that Patty insisted on knitting every day during the last days of her life.

I was pleased by the emphasis on women's lives and their contributions to society. I was also intrigued by the diversity of the women, especially since I would have supposed that the majority of contributions would tell the life stories of Mormon Caucasian women. Instead, only eight of the eighteen women featured fit that description.

It was a delight to learn about Jane Manning Jones, a black Mormon pioneer, as well as the surprisingly parallel life of Georgia Lathouris Mageras, a Greek "pioneer" midwife. Both endured the difficulties of minority status with resilience and integrity.

When I read history, I am often skeptical about the biographer's filter. I suppose I am more trusting when a historian is able to provide quotes from primary sources: diaries, newspaper articles written at the time, and observations from people who knew the subject intimately. My very unprofessional observation is that the research and scholarship in this collection are quite trustworthy. Each author is introduced with a statement about why he or she chose to write about a specific individual. My trust was increased by each biographer's emotional as well as intellectual commitment to his subject and I was pleased that for many writers this project was a labor of love.

I found myself staring at the photo of each woman, searching for visual clues. I wanted to meet and interview some of them myself

because I often felt I had more questions than answers when I finished reading.

Were these women "worth their salt?" I can't help but wonder how Patty Sessions might feel about having her life recorded in the same collection as "Mother Rachel Urban: Park City's Leading Madam." Personally, I am more comfortable with the book's apt subtitle:

"Notable but Often Unnoted Women of Utah." Does this book make a fine contribution to women's history? I certainly believe this book makes a fine contribution to women's history and would appreciate more of these kinds of collections. ■

Old Testament and Related Studies

Hugh Nibley

Deseret Book Co., 1986, 290 pages

Melinda Evans

Somerville, Massachusetts

Old Testament and Related Studies is explosive.

Each of its eleven chapters fuels an exciting spiritual energy and propels significant, often frustrating questions, while exploring how the Bible relates to areas of study such as mythology, archeology, and creationism.

The chapter entitled "Patriarchy and Matriarchy" initially prompted me to purchase the volume. As soon as I saw the title, I felt the resurgence of an old itch. Here, I thought, I would find an erudite argument to wave at my former mission president, bishops, or other males who failed to immediately relinquish their inspired leadership roles to my insistent—but nurturing—female sensibility; here would be the quadrisyllabic, biting prose that would vindicate my self-absorbed struggle to see things done my way.

Well, in some ways I actually found what I was looking for. Nibley's discussion is certainly erudite, exploring chains of subtly related thoughts that initially appear to be random, scattered leaps. His vocabulary is also richly dense, full of mouth-watering Greek roots, Egyptian terms, and syllable marathons like "eschatological" and "demythologizing." But while reading his message effectively calmed that old itch of mine to usurp leadership in our patriarchal society, it was calmed by enlightening humiliation, not dramatic vindication.

Beginning with a close look at Adam and Eve, Nibley reminds us that the "archetypal man and woman, in whom each of us is represented," are each incomplete without the other. Embodying a divine unity, one identifies with the other in action, purpose, and consequence,

although "being one flesh [does] not deprive either of them of individuality or separate interests and activities." Satan, trying to combat this divine unity both in the Garden and in mortality, conspires to place wedges between them, ultimately vowing to inflame enmity, power struggles, and oppression until men and women both voluntarily consume themselves in the lust for domination.

With this archetypal history, Nibley proceeds to illuminate the destructiveness of patriarchal-matriarchal power struggles. By examining the struggle in contexts such as the Dispensation of Adam, Greek mythology, and Shakespeare, he manages to draw examples ranging from Cain and Macbeth to Penelope and Miss Piggy.

Somewhere around the mention of Babylon as super-mall, I began to sense the article's urgent relevance to my own contemporary relationships with men.

This is where Nibley left me stranded and full of questions. In general, many of his articles end abruptly, wildly fraying loose ends into new questions rather than tying up and answering the initial question. At the end of "Patriarchy and Matriarchy," I understood how man and woman were created as integral parts of each other, how Satan introduced power struggles to destroy the integrity of that union, and how the perfect love of Christ overcomes the need for domination and divinely seals the man and woman.

However, I still wanted Nibley to tell me how this all relates to male/female relationships outside of an ultimate, sealed unity. His resolution is frustratingly simple, limited to the beauty of an ideal marriage. But what about my less-than-ideal relationship with the guy next door? I can't marry him to keep him from parking in front of my driveway, for example. Nibley stops at the easy ideal, which while it may be true is also horribly unsatisfying, leaving me with countless questions. How do I respond to my sister's chauvinist softball coach? How do I evade the heartlessness of office politics? How do I learn to trust that my mission president sincerely valued my leadership?

Ironically, these unanswered questions are ultimately the merit of reading Nibley's discussions. His frayed, loose ends somehow connect me with my own sensibilities, arguments, and uncertainties. They tie me to substantial, specific queries that motivate my scripture study, enliven my prayers, and elucidate my understanding of the temple.

I don't always understand Hugh Nibley, and I don't always agree with him, but I always leave Nibley with a soul full of active thought. Of the several volumes of his collected works I have read, *Old Testament and Related Studies* is the most compelling. In addition to "Patriarchy and Matriarchy," other chapters such as "Before

Adam," "Treasures in the Heavens," and "Unrolling the Scrolls" have ignited my desire for truth and filled my mind with new questions.

If nothing else, Nibley's great for my vocabulary. ❧

The Twelve Disasters of Christmas

Lisa Ray Turner

Bookcraft, 1997, 128 pages

Jerrie Hurd

Boulder, Colorado

Finally, a Christmas novel has come along that doesn't require a dose of insulin before reading. Lisa Ray Turner's delightful new novel, *The Twelve Disasters of Christmas*, paints a realistic and witty portrait of the frenzy of Christmas. In fact, the story may sound frighteningly familiar to readers—especially anyone who's been overworked and overwrought during the Christmas season—and who hasn't?

Natalie, the main character in *The Twelve Disasters of Christmas*, is having a lousy Christmas. She's pregnant—and not in the "queasy-but-still-recognizable-as-a-human-being stage," either. At forty-two, she's no dewy-eyed first-time mother and, in fact, is downright unhappy about the pregnancy. To complicate life further, her kids have developed terminal crabbiness, her husband gets transferred to the dreary town of Dirt Gulch, Mississippi, and her insufferable mother-in-law moves in. With her ankles swelling and her holiday spirits waning, Natalie battles these and a host of other holiday horrors. The result is a hilarious novel that not only entertains but eventually reminds us of what Christmas is about.

Well-written and refreshingly original, *The Twelve Disasters of Christmas* is a welcome addition to LDS literature. Turner succeeds in writing about the Christmas dilemmas we all face with a lighthearted yet believable touch. Readers will recognize the characters in the novel: the know-it-all soprano in the ward choir, the carping mother-in-law, the busy bishopric-member husband. Anyone who's ever been pregnant—especially beyond the age of thirty-five—will recognize herself in Natalie's bloated, miserable state.

This year, break away from the Christmas pressure cooker long enough to settle into your couch with a steaming mug of hot chocolate and *The Twelve Disasters of Christmas*. This quick, fun read goes down as easily as the hot chocolate and just may be the perfect antidote for holiday madness. ❧



ABSOLUTES

Not long ago
On a breezy summer day
Lying on our backs
In the grass
Under the warmth of the afternoon sun
My sister-in-law asked
"What absolutes do you believe in?"

I lay there silent for a while
Gazing at the white clouds in a sky of blue
And finally answered,
"Only one—
Charity never faileth."

I've seen Truth hurt
Religions kill
And Laws protect the guilty

But even though
I've seen love spit at
And warmth returned with ice
I've never seen true kindness backfire
In the giver's soul

Charity is like
Walking on a sandy beach
Drinking in the blue
And the crashing waves

When unexpectedly
Two dolphins playfully appear
Like Ebony fountains
Crashing through a floor of blue diamonds

Mesmerized
You watch
As they
Splash
Dive
And nod their heads
Then suddenly—
They're gone!

You watch
You wait
You listen

But all you see is ocean
All you hear is the steady surf
All you feel is the salty breeze

Were they really there?
Did they really smile?

Charity is like that—
Fleeting,
Not always as visible
As her distant cousins
Sympathy
Empathy
and
Love

But she's the only absolute I believe in.

Beckie Kearn
Pacific Palisades, California

DEADLINE!

7th Personal Essay Contest

Make this the year to enter the Helen Candland Stark Personal Essay Contest. The winning essay and two honorable mentions will be published in an upcoming issue of *Exponent II*. All other submissions will be passed on to our Reader's Committee for consideration. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 1998. Please send three copies of your essay to:

Essay Contest, *Exponent II*
Box 128
Arlington, MA 02174

Helen Candland Stark (1901-1994) earned a master's degree in English at Brigham Young University in 1936. She raised three children with her husband Henry. Throughout her life she remained a feminist (she endowed a yearly lectureship at BYU for a woman), an activist (particularly for environmental causes), and a poet.

Anniversary

When I was very young I feared strange dogs,
And darkened halls, and voices in the wind.
There was a hollow near our farm where fogs
Clung like cold sweat. And dugways where air thinned
To a scream. Alone, I knew no power could save.
But with my mother near I grew more brave.

In after-time I realized that these
Were trivial dangers; but that deeper fears
Haunted me still. Loneliness can freeze a
Heart. Not to be loved gave teeth to years
Already clawed with adverse men, and need of bread,
And the dark riddle of the bewildered dead.

You are my mother in this later day.
Because your hand is steady on my arm,
I smile at guests and confidently pay
The groceryman or teach a class. The warm
Security of touching you, my dear,
Gives meaning to this strange and transient here.

In giving me your heart you gave me more:
Safety and peace and beauty at my door.

Helen Candland Stark

Christmas Is Coming . . .

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If you have ever thought about writing for *Exponent II*, now is the time to do it! We welcome personal essays, articles, poetry, fiction, and book reviews for consideration. We focus on—but do not print exclusively—manuscripts that are women-related and Mormon-related. We publish the work of experienced as well as beginning writers and have editors who are glad to assist authors through the writing process. Some of the topics we are thinking about for upcoming issues include body image, international Church experience and Mormon culture, raising Mormon children, and experience of women of other religious traditions. Please type your submissions—double-spaced and single-sided, and, if possible, send them on IBM compatible or Mac disks. Include your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address (when available). Keep a copy of your work because manuscripts will not be returned unless you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



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